contemporary native art of canada

— manitoulin island

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Royal Ontario Museum
Ethnology Department
100 Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario

July 11 — September 30, 1978

Supporting Agencies:

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs
Indian Community Secretariat
(Ministry of Culture and Recreation)
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, Manitoulin Island

Paintings in exhibition on loan from:

Miss H.E. Band; Dr. B. Cinader; Mr. and Mrs. L.P. Currier; Dr. S. Dubiski; Ms. T. Loth; New College, University of Toronto; Ojibwe Cultural Foundation; Princess Margaret Hospital; Miss J. Ratz

Back Cover: **Smoking Fish,** Shirley Chechoo Debassige, 1977, 63 cm x 84 cm. H. E. Band Collection.

ISBN 0-88854-223-2

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Making Maple Syrup,
Don Ense, 1978,
51 cm x 61 cm.
Ojibwe Cultural
Foundation Collection.

introduction

Usually, the artist in any society plays the role of the visionary, creating new ways of looking at the world that surrounds him. The contemporary Native artists of Manitoulin have turned to their past and are presenting us with "new ways" of looking at their traditional Ojibwe culture. Choosing the "Morrisseau style" of painting, a Canadian phenomenon which was created by Norval Morrisseau and emerged during the 1960s in the art-conscious world of Toronto, the artists of Manitoulin, through their paintings, force the viewers to re-examine their attitudes towards a traditional culture. It is apparent from the essays in this booklet that the artists, the critics, and the art-buying public are not always in agreement as to the *raison d'être* for this visual reaffirmation. However, it must be understood that, whether they are aware of it on a conscious level or not, the Ojibwe artists by their very being have deep roots in a type of cultural thinking which is able to provide them with a unique source for imbuing their paintings with the particular Ojibwe spirit. As temporary guardians of this impressive Ojibwe legacy, the Native artists of Manitoulin represented in this exhibition have shown their commitment to their culture.

Tom Hill

Contemplation with the Spirit,
Daphne Odjig Beavon,
1975,
54 cm x 69 cm.
J. Ratz Collection.

manitoulin island

Considered the largest freshwater island in the world, Manitoulin Island stretches along the north shore of Lake Huron immediately northwest of Georgian Bay. It reaches nearly 160 kilometres in length and varies from 3 to 65 kilometres in width, covering a total area of 2,775 square kilometres. It has more than 100 inland lakes, the three largest of which are almost 30 metres higher than Lake Huron.

The name for the island, *Manitoulain*, is probably a derivation of *Manitowaning*, an Algonkian word meaning "The Den of the Manitou". *Manitou* was the Indian name for a great spirit of power. The island of the Inland Sea (Lake Huron) was known as the home of the Great Manitou, hence the name Manitoulin Island.

Recent evidence suggests that man inhabited this island at least 4,000 years ago, but little is known of these early peoples. However, records of 300 years ago describe the inhabitants as a tribe of Algonkian-speaking people called the Odawa. According to Odawa oral tradition, their ancestors were settled on Manitoulin Island long before the time of recorded history.

In 1615, near the mouth of the French

Nanabush and the Sacred Pipe of Peace,
Melvin Madahbee, 1977,
63 cm x 91 cm.
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Collection.

River, Champlain met a group of Indians, with whom he was able to establish friendly relations. This group, as indicated by later Jesuit journals, probably belonged to the Odawa of Manitoulin Island. He called these people *les cheveux relevés* (people with their hair done up) because of the unusual manner in which the men of the tribe wore their hair on top of their heads. He described them as great hunters, fishermen, and voyageurs. Although they were a sedentary tribe who cultivated maize, the Manitoulin Odawa soon became shrewd and prosperous fur traders with the French as well.

The first missionary to Manitoulin Island, Father Joseph Antoine Poncet, a Jesuit, spent the winters of 1648 and 1649 with the Odawa. It was during this period that the Iroquois finally decimated the Huron nation, and Father Poncet's cousin Father Gabriel Lalemant, a missionary among the Hurons, was martyred.

For many years the Manitoulin Odawa managed to stay free of the continual warfare between the Huron and the Iroquois. However, in July of 1652 a band of Iroquois came to Manitoulin, slaughtered many Odawa, and took others captive. The remaining inhabitants fled the island. Some travelled west to Mackinac, others went even farther west and were nearly annihilated by the Sioux, and still others fled to Michigan and Wisconsin, where

they were welcomed by the Potawatomi. In the 1670s some groups returned to Manitoulin and were subsequently visited by Jesuit missionaries. Around the turn of the century, many Manitoulin Indians followed Cadillac to Detroit. Owing to difficult circumstances the missionaries stopped visiting the island, and the remaining groups eventually lost touch with Christianity.

For the next 125 years, very little written material exists concerning Manitoulin Island. Nearly all its inhabitants seem to have deserted it. The exact reason for this exodus remains a mystery, but an Indian tradition suggests that evil spirits descended on the island, causing much sickness and troubles. To drive out these spirits, the people set fire to the woods during the dry season. The fire swept over the whole island, leaving only desolation behind. If this story is true, then it would have taken at least 100 years for the trees to grow again and the game to come back.

The War of 1812 scarcely touched Manitoulin Island, but there is a legend that some Indians who were fleeing from the Americans took refuge in the interior of the island. In order to frighten the Indians, the Americans are said to have aimed their cannon inland, and in recent times a number of cannon balls have been found on the west end of Manitoulin.

The early 19th century saw a gradual movement of Indians back to Manitoulin. The Odawa Indians who had joined the British during the War of 1812 found themselves in a precarious position when hostilities ceased. Many had been residents of Michigan before the war, but they were not allowed to return to their homes, despite their complaints. Eventually they turned towards the land of their forefathers, Manitoulin Island. In addition, a steady influx of immigrants from the British Isles settled in the Bruce Peninsula (between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay). Indians of this district found that the presence of the settlers was causing a decrease in the game, and they, too, began to look for a home on Manitoulin Island. Indian migration to Manitoulin Island from other areas was encouraged by the establishment of trading posts on the island by the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1825 Father Jean Baptiste Proulx, a missionary to the Odawa in Michigan, led a number of that tribe and a few Potawatomi to Manitoulin, where they founded the village and mission at Wikwemikong on the east end of the island.

After the War of 1812 the government of Upper Canada was anxious to gain ownership of the land along the southern shores of Georgian Bay. There was much pressure to remove the Indians from their holdings and give the valuable land to white settlers. At the same time, there arose a concern for Indian welfare. It was recognized that those tribes that had been living in contact with whites had been ravaged by disease and debilitated by the introduction of alcohol. As a solution to both these problems, Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1818 to 1829, proposed that various Native peoples be segregated on Manitoulin Island.

Sir John Colborne, Maitland's successor, heartily approved of this idea. He hoped that the sparse Indian population of Manitoulin Island, then consisting of only a few Chippewa and several Odawa families, would be increased by thousands of other Indians who would establish a large Indian settlement. Colborne visited Manitoulin and spoke with the "chief men" of the Odawa who then resided on the island. He persuaded them to sign an agreement that would permit other tribes the governor recommended to live on the island. He also visited Indians in western Upper Canada and held out to them the inducement of a more permanent home on Manitoulin Island.

Colborne's term as Lieutenant-Governor ended before he could fully realize the plan for an Indian settlement, but his successor, Sir Francis Bond Head, carried out his arrangements, signing a treaty with the Manitoulin Indians in 1836. He also concluded a treaty with the Native peoples of the Saugeen Peninsula, which called for their resettlement on Manitoulin. In addition, the annual distribution of presents, a custom originated by the French and continued by the British to win the confidence of the Indians, was trans-

Spirit of Art, James Simon, 1978, 15 cm x 12.5 cm.
ROM Collection.

ferred to Manitoulin Island in order to induce the Indians to retreat there voluntarily and to expedite the treaties. Head believed the island was ideally suited for an Indian reserve because of its many lakes and surrounding islands, and because its land was suitable for cultivation. He did not understand the delicate ecological balance that existed between the Indian lifeways and the island's resources, nor did he understand the disastrous effect that would occur to this balance if the government succeeded in settling thousands of Indians on Manitoulin.

In 1837 the clearing of the land began. At that time the Indian settlers numbered only 268. In the autumn of 1838 the government sponsored the founding of an "Establishment", and the village of Manitowaning was established. Captain G.T. Anderson, the commissioner in charge of the project, and his staff, including a surgeon, a minister, a teacher, and several mechanics, carpenters, coopers, and blacksmiths, assumed the task of helping the settlers become self-supporting while learning the ways of 19th-century white civilization. Progress was slow, but by 1842 the settlers numbered approximately 700. Most of the Indians who settled on Manitoulin came from Michigan and the area around the shores of Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

For 20 years the Establishment was supported entirely by the government and then it was finally acknowledged that the attempt to segregate Indians on Manitoulin Island was a failure. After a thorough investigation the project was abandoned. Though the Odawa had adapted to culti-

vation and the practice of mechanical trades, the Ojibwe had preferred their more traditional lifestyle of seasonal hunting and fishing. Many of the tribes had been made uneasy by the constant pressure from increasing numbers of settlers. They had drifted from one reserve to another or had been shifted about by various treaties, which were designed primarily to accommodate the white inhabitants. Many of the Indians who had come to the settlements returned to their old homes, though some founded new villages on various other parts of the island.

After the failure of the Establishment, government commissioners suggested that the 1836 treaty with the Indians be voided. They rationalized that since the treaty had stipulated that Manitoulin Island would become a large Indian reserve, and this had not happened, the treaty was invalid. In the fall of 1861, negotiations were begun to persuade the Indians to cede their land to the government and permit it to be sold to white settlers. On October 4, 1862, William McDougall, then commissioner of Crown Lands, initiated a treaty with the Manitoulin residents at Manitowaning. According to the terms of the agreement, each family was offered 100 acres, with the proceeds from land sales to be held in trust and the interest on the purchase paid annually. In addition, each chief received $2.00 and each warrior $1.00 as an advance on the land sales. McDougall obtained treaty signatures from those groups residing west of the Heywood Sound and Manitoulin Gulf regions, but the compact was firmly rejected by the Indians residing in Wikwemikong on the eastern portion of the island. Furthermore, the Wikwemikong missionaries protested the new treaty to the government, stating that signatures had been obtained through unethical means. Finally the government agreed to set aside a special reserve for the Wikwemikong residents. This portion of the island is known today as the Manitoulin Island Unceded Indian Reserve, and it remains possibly the only unceded Indian reserve in North America. In theory, Wikwemikong is not part of Canada.

In 1866, despite all protests, Manitoulin Island was finally opened to white settlers. Surveyors divided the island into townships, with the land going for 50¢ an acre. Roads were built in 1867 to facilitate settlement, and within ten years of the treaty villages had sprung up all over the island. As these settlements grew large enough, many of the townships were organized municipally. For political and judicial purposes Manitoulin Island was made part of the Electoral District of Algoma. In 1889, by an act of the Ontario Legislature, the Provincial Judicial District of Manitoulin was formed, with Gore Bay selected as the judicial seat by popular vote. In 1902 Manitoulin Island, along with a portion of the mainland, became the Electoral District of Manitoulin, with the right to elect its own member to the Ontario Legislature. Then in 1933 the Ontario Legislature amalgamated the ridings of Algoma and Manitoulin.

Today Manitoulin Island has a population of approximately 11,000, of whom 3,000 are Native peoples. The Indians are descended mainly from the Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe tribes and live for the most part on five reserves: Sucker Creek, Sheguiandah, West Bay, Wikwemikong, and Sheshegwaning. Many residents of the West Bay Reserve work in the Espanola and Sudbury areas and commute daily.

The chief industries of the island include agriculture, lumbering, fishing, turkey farming, and cattle raising. At present 20 per cent of the land is cultivated, and less arable land is used for grazing cattle and sheep. Lumber has been a major industry of the region since the 19th century, with three large lumber mills operating at Little Current by 1890. Commercial fishing was started by 1880. Every year approximately 50,000 turkeys are marketed commercially, and each September the Manitoulin Livestock Co-operative holds one of the largest one-day cattle sales in North America.

Famed for its inland lakes and rivers, Manitoulin Island is a haven for fishermen, hunters, and yachtsmen. In recent years a good highway, rail service, and an airport have made Manitoulin steadily more attractive as a wilderness resort area.

Mary Lou Fox Radulovich
(edited by Valerie Grant)

Drummer,
John Laford, 1977,
80 cm x 142 cm.
Cinader Collection.

manitoulin island — explorations of past, present, and future

Contemporary Native Canadian artists, balancing the trend towards integration with the need for cultural preservation, are expressing their thoughts and emotions in persuasive images. Many alternatives are being explored artistically to resolve the dilemma between the preservation of a magnificent past and the search for a place in the technological and social reality of modern Canada.[2–7] Artists are attempting to state or resolve the conflict between the affirmation of traditional values and the apparent irrelevance of tribal culture and language for the young generation of Natives who strive for success and acceptance in the wider Canadian society. The renaissance of a transformed Native art is a moving chapter in the emotional and cultural mosaic of Canadian life.[6]

On Manitoulin Island there are now three generations of artists whose approach to painting reflects the evolution of Native consciousness. The first of these generations is represented by Angus Trudeau, born in 1906 and clearly a product of the turn of the century. His paintings reflect the industrial world in which he made his living, and lovingly yet unsentimentally record structures of ships that sailed the Great Lakes, on which he worked as a cook. In a sense, his chosen images affirm a technological society and the 19th-century relationship of Native people to it. His own interest extends to other aspects of his period, and among his paintings that do not deal with the Great Lakes is a loving representation of the Wikwemikong Church, as he remembers it from his childhood.

The second generation of painters concerned themselves much more with the natural world around them and the traditional roots of the Native view of the world. Their techniques and patterns drew on Native crafts, but also reflected aesthetic discoveries of the early 20th century. Francis Kagige and Daphne Odjig Beavon grew up in Wikwemikong and went to the same school, and both began to draw at a very early age. Of the two, Daphne Odjig made the most effective and determined link with contemporary western painting and the most impressive synthesis of archetypal images of her people and a modernistic expression which owed something to the 20th-century school of Paris; her "Thunderbird Woman and Man" optimizes this synthesis.[5,6] Her work establishes her clearly as the most impressive artist to have emerged among the many creative talents of Manitoulin Island. Her commissioned posters for El Al Airline reflect her international role, and her large mural at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa demonstrates that she is receiving national recognition. It is intriguing to find some parallels in the conceptualization of Odjig's work and that of Francis Kagige during the last decade. His early work was concerned with illustrations of legends and found its best expression in the paintings he provided for *Tales of Nokomis*, retold by Patronella Johnston.[14] His later work culminated in a brilliant union of observed movements of birds and fish and patterns of imagination: hard-edge painting and abstract colouring devices enhance natural forms. The painting results from a process in which natural movement and shape are observed and internalized, and then the essence of the movement or stance is re-expressed. In short, Kagige gives us birds and fish as a synthesis of representation and imagination.

This mode is also employed in various ways by younger painters now in their early twenties, the third generation. It is discernible in "Blue Jay That Stole the Winter" by Blake Debassige, "Butterfly" by Shirley Chechoo Debassige, and "Humming Bird" by Roger Medambie. Just as the generation of artists born at the turn of the last century reflected artistic consciousness of the Victorian era and acceptance of industrial civilization, and the generation born in the late twenties reflected a desire to return to nature and the influence on them of non-representational art, so the generation born in the middle fifties uses an idiom that has come to them through the work of older Native painters. It expresses a love of nature, a growing Native nationalism, and a wish to explore the essence of their ancestors' myths and customs. No doubt all these developments of the third generation of painters would have occurred without any of the specific organizational ingredients that promoted them, but these ingredients accelerated the development and ultimately created a flowering of Ontario Native art, which was particularly poignant and particularly successful on Manitoulin Island. Younger painters had some individual experiences that affected their artistic evolution. John E. Laford, often a truant from school, watched Francis Kagige at work, and received encouragement from him. Randy Trudeau saw some of Lloyd Caibaiosai's works, before the older man's tragic death, and was inspired by them. Apart from these and other individual encounters, three factors were influential: the first, encounters with the work of Norval Morrisseau; the second, the activities of the Manitou Arts Foundation; and the third, the consolidating event, the organization of Native crafts, art, and education by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation.

Morrisseau's work, which had its begin-

Wikwemikong 1919, Angus Trudeau, 80 cm x 65 cm. Cinader Collection.

nings in distant Beardmore, Red Lake, and Thunder Bay, had an authority and strength that was felt in Native communities throughout Ontario, and it attracted sympathetic attention well beyond the boundaries of the reserves. Its strength lay in an almost convulsive visual impact and in a powerful aesthetic sense which projected a vision of the essence and emotional content of Native myth and religion. Employing the visual language of rock painting and Midéwewin scrolls, Norval Morrisseau pioneered a neo-archaic style and an archetypal content of painting. From it, the Ojibwe-Cree-Odawa school of painting arose, and it represents a high point in the achievements of the Indian renaissance.

Among the factors that spread this and other aesthetic discoveries, from the graphic masterwork of Carl Ray to the painterly invention of Odjig, was the brief operation of the Manitou Arts Foundation. It was conceived by Tom Peletier in 1966 and received funding from 1971 to 1973. The first summer school was arranged in July/August of 1971 on Schreiber Island in the north channel of Manitoulin Island. Students for the school were recruited from reserves and high schools across Ontario, and in the first year every one of the approximately 40 applicants was admitted. During this first summer, the resource people included Carl Ray, Gerald Dokis, and Daphne Odjig Beavon, and two of the students were Shirley Chechoo and Randolph Trudeau. Afterwards, Chechoo was sent for training to Santa Fé, where she studied Indian music-teaching technique under Louis Ballard, and then in 1972 and 1973 she taught at the Manitou Arts Foundation. In 1972 and 1973 the school was active again on Schreiber Island, although its area of concentration in 1972 was music and in 1973 film and theatre. Nevertheless, there was room for painters: in 1972 Blake Debassige, Isadore Wadow, Dan Commander, and Wain Rogers partici-

pated in the course, and in 1973 Martin Panamick and Saul Williams attended.

The painters of Manitoulin Island who had interacted with the Arts Foundation maintained contact and sustained one another. Others who had not been on Schreiber Island associated with those who had been there, so that ultimately a loose group of painters was formed, consisting of Blake Debassige, John Eric Laford, Martin Panamick, James Simon, and Randolph Trudeau. The group was fully aware of the need for each artist to develop independently and find the style most expressive of his personal concepts. To some extent, the themes of the young painters were legends. Debassige, for instance, depicted his peoples' travels to the sacred island, that is, to Manitoulin Island, in a large painting now in the collection of New College. (He makes another allusion to seafaring migration, in terms of the dangers of the waters, in his painting "Nah-Min Being Gah'n Dah't".) To some extent, too, events of daily life were depicted. This is best summarized in the painting "Drummers" by John Eric Laford, which vibrates with the rhythm and the joy of the drums that accompany every major Indian social event. These young men began to find marketing support and an ethnic framework in the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, which conducted annual sales and artistic summer programmes between 1974 and 1977 for the painters who came from supporting reserves.

In 1976 and 1977 the site chosen for the cultural program was Dreamer's Rock on the Birch Island Reserve. According to Mrs. Mary Lou Fox Radulovich, the craft coordinator of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, this island was chosen for its spiritual significance. In the past, the young men of the Ojibwe nation came to Birch Island "to fast and pray, so that they would receive their dream or vision of what direction their lives would follow. Perhaps a man would become a medicine man, a man of healing powers, a chief or a great warrior. Their dream or vision would guide them in achieving this special status. Also a vision of their guardian spirit might be revealed to them. Dreamer's Rock is also known as the path of the Thunderbirds or Animkeek — because it is here that thunder is the loudest. The thunderbirds are important spirits in the lives of the Anishnawbek. They possess great powers. This area was also a meeting place for the Anishnawbek. So it was for these reasons that this place was chosen to bring young artists together." Meetings on Birch Island strengthened Indian ways and helped in reconstructing ancestral ways of Indian life. This was soon seen in paintings and drawings which celebrated the renaissance of old, often forgotten, customs, particularly those of the Sweat Lodge, so lovingly depicted in one of Debassige's paintings.

The painters of Manitoulin Island deal with nature and myth and with the social and political conditions of life, and they do so with vigour and talent. It may be worthwhile to look at each of these categories to recognize the universality of Native art, through the ethnic idiom, as well as the individual styles and the common features which have evolved among the Manitoulin painters. Examining first the painters' relation to nature, we find the most tenderly observed depictions of animals in the drawings of Martin Panamick, in which he has recorded what he has seen on his daily walks through the woods. One of these shows the flicker and the insects that form his prey. During 1977, Shirley Chechoo, now Shirley Debassige, painted stylized representations of the life of the Indians who trap and hunt in the winter woods of Northern Ontario. These are recollections of her childhood, when she travelled by plane with her parents and brothers from James Bay to Cochrane. There her father fished and trapped from early October until the spring breakup in April, and the family lived on fish, beaver, and rabbits. It is characteristic of the rapid diffusion of discoveries among Manitoulin's young Native artists that in 1978 Don Ense painted "Making Maple Syrup" in a similarly descriptive manner. The immediacy of representing nature and man's relation to it is the exception rather than the rule of contemporary Native art. In his early attempts to create a basis for modern Woodland Indian Art, Morrisseau had resorted, on occasion, to the ancient device of the X-ray depiction, in which the artist tells what he knows, not just what he sees at a given moment. In recent years, a transition from X-ray structure to a decorative linear

Flying Geese,
Francis Kagige, 1970,
65 cm x 80 cm.
Cinader Collection

breakdown of internal patterns of man and animals has occurred in many paintings of the Ojibwe-Cree-Odawa school of painters. This approach has not been shared by Odjig or Kagige, and among the younger painters of Manitoulin Island it is only Randy Trudeau and E. Kanasawe who employ it. One of these paintings by Randy Trudeau, showing two mating otters, may serve to demonstrate this approach: internal lines and areas enhance the movement of each animal and the interrelationship between them.

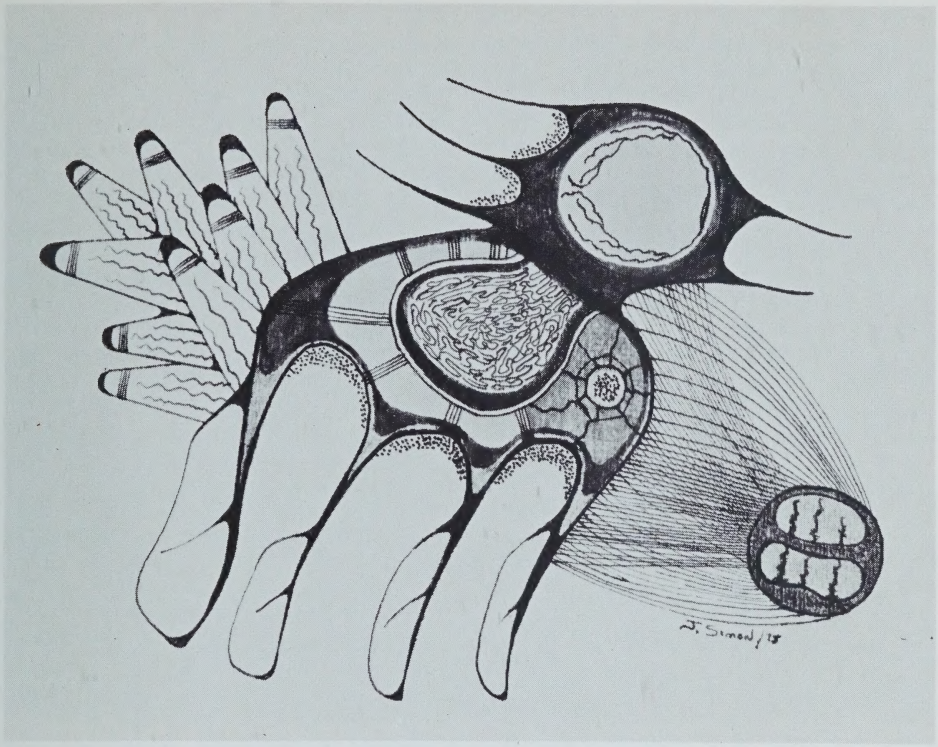
In general, the style most characteristic of the Manitoulin Island painters is the combination of the essence of observed movement and abstract patterns. The actual implementation of this synthesis shows considerable individual variation, and distinctive solutions have been attempted and have succeeded. One such solution can be found in "Three Eagles" by Odjig, in which a network of cylindrical and conical spaces frames several eagle heads, so that movement of the beholder's eye is channelled by the spatial design and ultimately leads to the recognition of soaring flight. In a different way, Kagige has achieved a synthesis of movement and colour contrasts in depicting the flight of geese. In a painting completed in 1970 he shows two geese in flight, one above the other, with beautifully observed relation between moving wings and stretched bodies. The wings of the upper goose are on the down stroke, those of the lower goose on the up stroke. On the inside of the wing, there is a triangular pattern in yellow, red, and black, which seems to restate, in its contrasting bands, the spatial contrasts between the wings, above and below the body. Flight is shown in an even more stylized form in a painting of 1968, in which an angular representation of the birds, again in bright primary colours,

Two Otters Mating, Randolph Trudeau, 1978, 60.5 cm x 45 cm. Cinader Collection.

summarizes the essence of the ducks' flight. This painting is a forerunner of a more precisely executed work which became part of the title page of *I am an Indian* (Kent Gooderham, ed., J.M. Dent and Sons Canada Ltd., Toronto, 1969). Here, hard-edge painting seems to be developed independently, in an attempt to evoke movement by lines and colour areas. The transition from observation to restatement of essence becomes even more sophisticated in some of Jim Simon's small drawings, which are an abstract summary of the observer's emotional experience. "The Partridge Drummer", completed in 1976, conveys the movements of the bird in an elegant relation between coloured areas and lines and communicates perfectly what Jim Simon experienced when he watched birds in the forest "communicating with one another through drumming".

Observation is rarely unaffected by the conditioning of the observer and thus the transition from description of nature to evocation of myths occurs over a diffuse boundary. Legends have formed an important starting point in the renaissance of Woodland Indian Art, so much so that the whole movement has been referred to as Legend Painting by John Anson Warner.[17] In fact, legends have guided the Native art movement, partly through illustration of books, partly through paintings in which collective myths were evoked, and legends have prepared the ground for the paintings that convey the personal and newly created myths of the artist himself.

Probably the earliest of the books illustrated by a Manitoulin Island painter was Patronella Johnston's *Tales of Nokomis,*[14] which showed Kagige's lyrical visions in clear and imaginatively depicted scenes. Odjig Beavon wrote and illustrated a set of 10 books of Indian legends for children,[1] and she designed book covers such as that for *I am Nokomis, too.*[16] She also illustrated *Tales from the Smokehouse,*[15] with



Partridge Drummer, James Simon, 1976, 60.5 cm x 45 cm.
Cinader Collection.

pictures of gentle eroticism, which reflected her masterly synthesis of 20th-century styles of Europe and the emotion of Native Canadian art. The Ojibwe Cultural Foundation produced several booklets for the education of elementary school children. One of these, *How the bees got their stingers,* was illustrated by James Simon, and another, *Ko-Ko-Ko, the Owl,* by Martin Panamick.

Among the younger painters, Martin Panamick has been a particularly prolific illustrator of little books. His delightful pen sketches embellish publications of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, among them *Nishnabe Delights,*[9] a book of recipes collected from the Ojibwe and Odawa people of Manitoulin Island and the reserves on the north shore of Lake Huron, and *Why the Beaver Has a Broad Tail,*[8] a story told by Mrs. Susan Enosse of the Wikwemikong Reserve. Martin Panamick's graphic talents were employed in other connections as well, including the designing of the eagle symbol used to identify the crafts distributed by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation.

Distinct from the illustrations of myths that depict scenes from stories and legends are paintings that serve to evoke rather than to describe a myth. One important example of this type of painting is "Thunderbird Woman and Man" by Daphne Odjig Beavon, which formed the cover of the catalogue for the 1977 exhibition "Contemporary Indian Art—the trail from the past to the future"[6] at the Mackenzie Gallery of Trent University, and is also reproduced in *100 Years of Native American Painting,*[5] the 1978 catalogue of the Oklahoma Museum of Art. It deals with the story of a thunderbird woman who could, at will, change from human to bird form and the young brave who fell in love with her human form. When his beloved was killed by his older brother, the young brave left home and wandered aimlessly, torn with grief. Nanabozho helped the

disconsolate young man and guided him to a high mountain, where the lovers met again, for the thunderbird woman was still alive and was being nursed back to health by other thunderbirds. The young man wanted to live with her forever, but to do so he had to be changed into the shape of an eagle and to adopt the lifestyle of eagles. Finally, the chief of the thunderbirds brought about this transformation. Odjig's painting shows the transitional dichotomy of shape and being, in that a central human figure has bird attributes and a Janus human/eagle head; it is put into muted colour fields, which evoke the rarefied heights of towering mountains.

Debassige's "Blue Jay That Stole the Winter" is inspired by the legend of the blue jay, bringing in the spring, and he treats the bird as a pattern that suggests strength and growth. The muted colours of this painting are dramatically contrasted by the riot of colours used by Melvin Madahbee to project his feeling of awe in "Nanabush and the Sacred Pipe of Peace". Randy Trudeau considers not only myths but also their transmission. His painting "Teaching of the Great Manitou" refers to the religious initiation of a 10-year-old boy by his father, who teaches him that "the Great Manitou is good, has created mankind, the earth and all that is on it. Because Manitou was lonely, he cried and his tears formed the rivers and lakes which provide moisture for trees and flowers. For all this, thanks should be given to the Great Manitou, every year." The painting, in a chromatic scale between brown, ochre, and grey, shows father and son, themselves appearing like rooted trees, in a dreamlike landscape of mists. The father's protective arm is on the shoulder of the son. Randy has succeeded in creating an image of mystery and tenderness, which has merit not only as an emotional document but also as a painterly achievement.

Myths[13] are the collective memory, handed down from generation to generation, but they can also spring from individual imagination, expressed in the vocabulary of cultural symbols. The created work is particularly moving when the artist has been confronted with overwhelming events and when an attempt is made to change the specific response into a timeless generality.[7,10,12] One such myth-evoking event occurred in the winter of 1975/76 when seven teenagers of the Wikwemikong Reserve committed suicide. The judicial enquiry could not establish a specific motive, other than the general hopelessness of life in the reserve. The young Manitoulin painters were profoundly moved by the deaths—a threat seemed to hang over all the adolescent Natives of Manitoulin Island. Speculations about the agency involved in the deaths continued for many months; the Bear Walker was first thought to be responsible. This was an explanation that fell back on transmitted myths, and Jim Simon painted a large, essentially abstract, evocation of this fearsome myth of an agency that causes disaster and destruction. However, in the end, the Bear Walker was not a satisfactory explanation for what had happened, and the responsibility of other agencies was considered. For a brief period a Catholic priest came under suspicion. He had been in Wikwemikong before and during the suicides and had then been transferred to West Bay — and three mysterious, unnatural deaths, one by violence, another by drowning, had occurred since the priest's arrival. These feelings of an all-pervasive threat by agencies of destruction had to be met with a positive life-affirming view. Finally Debassige attempted to resolve the threat and delineate a path to renewed affirmation of life in a painting, "Woman in White Buckskin". It depicts the dream of a young girl — a woman in white buckskin appeared and had a message for a young man — not understood or remembered by the girl. Fish, festooned around the woman in the white buckskin dress, are symbols of good fortune, that is, the messge will end the senseless deaths. The spirit of the young man, a skeleton in a cocoon, is shown on the right of the painting. Layers of grey and blue are heavens; several heavens — Blake thinks there may be seven — exist in Ojibwe mythology.

Dreams also provide the experience of Leland Bell's "Chipmunk Dancing" and of Don Ense's "The Boy and the Eagle". Don Ense's painting, in its nearly monochromatic palette, is an autobiographical account of a dream stemming from Don's aspirations as a poet and painter, expressed as a yearning to join the eagles in their flight to the south, to the land of the

Teaching of the Great Manitou, Randolph Trudeau, 1976.
91 cm x 66 cm. Cinader Collection.

eagles. The dreamer, linked to the birds, becomes transformed into an eagle; the painting evokes the process of this transformation. It is intriguing to compare this dynamic version of transformation with the monumental statement formulated by Odjig in her painting "Thunderbird Woman and Man".[5,6]

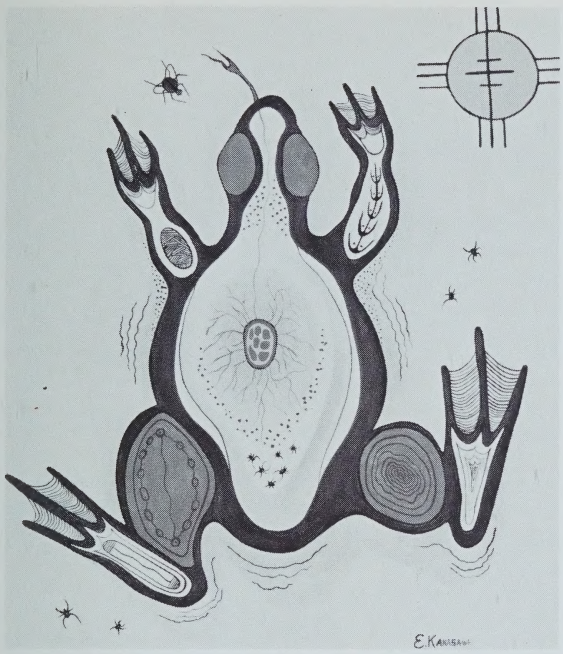
If paintings and drawings of legends and myths deal with the past, drawings and paintings of political and philosophical statements deal with collective aspirations for the future. Cataclysmic changes in Indian society have continuously modified Native outlooks and of late have led from rudderless disorientation to a renewed self-respect and novel political concepts. These developments challenge the artist to seek their visual expression. During the last few years, even artists with a predominantly aesthetic motivation are beginning to use their paintings to comment on the past and to envision paths to a better future. Odjig's large mural (8 feet x 27 feet) recently unveiled at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa has gone this road. It consists of four sections dealing with life and culture before the arrival of white immigrants, the destruction of the Indian way of life, and finally the rediscovery of a sense of identity and purpose. The story begins on the left of the canvas with the image of an Indian drummer; the drum symbolizes Indian traditions. A thunderbird and the serene face of the earth mother state the unity of man and nature. In the second panel, scouts watch the approach of huge boats, and one scout, desperately clasping his drum, conveys anxiety. The third panel shows the dissolution of Indian society and the individual disasters of Indian people. They are locked into a confined space filled with faceless people, wrecked cars, broken drums, an empty whisky bottle. The final panel shows an optimistic projection of the future. Some Indians are escaping with

their colourful drum intact. Young men and women, proud and secure, go to the Pow Wow. The thunderbird is once again protective and linked with the people, and the sun is shining. Odjig, in describing her painting, says: "They are still Indians, not brown Whitemen! They have been able to harmonize their cultural beliefs within a changing world — they have been attempting to retain the best out of two cultures, and above all, they are proud to be Indians. This is not the end of the story, but for some a new beginning."

Blake Debassige has created posters summarizing messages that emanate from or converge with the philosophy of a nationwide movement of Native nationhood described by some sociologists as the Pan-Indian Movement.[10] The first of these posters, called "Breath of Our Grandfathers", states the need to return to traditional wisdom through the agency of the old people and thus pleads for respect for the old people, which had been lost by the younger generation. The grandparents of today's teenagers are perhaps the only, and certainly the greatest, resource for the renewal of Indian language, philosophy, and folklore. On Manitoulin Island, the old age home in Wikwemikong is a centre of vital, old people, such as Susan Enosse.[8] "Breath of Our Grandfathers" was designed to make young people aware of the wealth and strength that can be theirs. The old man, at the end of his life, is beginning to leave his human shell; his arm has already turned into a bird and soon his whole body will be similarly transformed. Spiders, at the upper edge of the picture, are called to the Sweat Lodge to grant health. Their ability to do so is a belief of the Lakota Sioux. Another of Blake Debassige's posters recognizes the central role of language in the preservation of culture; it is called "The Voice of the Land Is in Our Language". The loss of Native languages would end cultural identity and leave future generations rudderless. The alternative is the bilingual Indian, speaking his Native as well as the official language. At this stage, many Ojibwe have already lost their own language. On Manitoulin Island, ways to bring it back are being explored by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation. This poster pleads that language is part of the network through which man finds his place in the scheme of things. Man is rooted in the soil and linked with all the other beings of the world. Man's root is the language of his ancestors. A third poster states the view that there is an Indian nation; it is entitled "Accept One Another". As tribal identity is eroded, it must be replaced by a feeling of "Indianness". The most creative Natives are consciously engaging in this process of cultural diffusion and selective acquisition. Two people of different language and tribe are linked by the messenger bird and a pouch symbolizing the exchange of gifts that sealed the friendships in past tribal encounters.

Francis Kagige made a very personal statement in this general context of political art in "Nature's Lament" which in 1976 became a print, executed by Woodland Studios. It shows the weeping Indian with bared, bleeding heart, surrounded by a flotsam and jetsam of animals and trees, uprooted by some destructive storm. A buffalo skeleton in the right-hand corner serves as a symbol of genocide. This is explicitly a politically influenced composition, but it is ultimately a personal expression of the feeling that the world is upside down and the future bleak. Young Mel Madahbee from the Sucker Creek Reserve, starting from the opposite pole of emotion, projects his view of past and future in a painting that consists of two vertical rows of vignettes, which convey his feelings of the essence of Indianness. In these vignettes, tipis in a snow-covered landscape, a rider with horned headdress, and mountain landscapes emerge from a vibrantly blue background. The painting seems to consist of greeting cards sent from a past suffused with romanticism and evoking nostalgia. Mel Madahbee has said about this painting: "A Nation we live/ A Nation we die/A Nation to be/Born Again."

While the world of the artist throbs with the past and the future, a gentler stream of traditional creative work continues on the Island. Weaving with porcupine hair on birch-bark boxes is an important home industry in many Ontario reserves. On Manitoulin Island this activitiy is organized, and marketing is promoted by the Ojibwe Culural Foundation; the annual Native arts and crafts festival provides an additional outlet. Among the most skilled weavers is Delia Beboning, originally from



Frog—Insects,
Eleanor Kanasawe, 1976,
66 cm x 71 cm.
ROM Collection.

Sagamok, who now lives in West Bay. A round box with turtle in green and pink is a superb example of her meticulous craftsmanship and her evolved sense of design and colour. The evolution of quill-weaving designs continues by invention and by imitation. Irene Desmoulin works in an archaic style, which relies on the natural shades of undyed porcupine quill and creates patterns reminiscent of lace. One of the stylistic innovations displayed in this exhibition is a birch-bark box by Helen Trudeau, in which the edge of the lid shows four bands, each broken into strips of green, red, and yellow and continued on the outer cylindrical surface of the lid. Thus a hard-edge design is combined on the top of the birch-bark box with the rounded shape of a flower. New designs have also appeared in wool weaving, and attractive geometric patterns in strong colours have been developed by Doris MacIntyre—two examples are seen in this exhibition. The artists have started to interact with the artisans and may in the long run contribute to the evolution of craft designs—and thus may become a factor in the future development of Manitoulin Island's Native crafts.

The vigour and strength of an artistic movement depend not only on its historical and traditional source and the talent of its artists, but also on the public to which it addresses itself. A brief explosive flowering is possible even without a public steeped in the tradition that underlies the art. However, the future of a Native art movement and the persistence of its achievements must depend on a Native public, which keeps the artist "honest", that is, which assures that he remains linked to the essence of the Native tradition. There are good reasons to believe that such a public may not always be available for the modern Native art movement, whether it be Australian Aboriginal or Canadian Eskimo. For some time, there was an apparent danger that there might not be an Indian public for Canadian Woodland Indian Art, but Manitoulin Island has become the focus of a new interest of Native people in Native painting. This is already noticeable in the influence of the young Manitoulin painters on the traditional porcupine-quill weavers and on those making other birch-bark objects. Victoria Osawamick has made a porcupine-quill eagle designed by her

son, Jim Simon, and thus has departed from the traditional flower and animal patterns to a more dynamic image. Another example of this influence is a birch-bark canoe constructed by Victoria and Sam Osawamick and painted by Jim Simon. One of these canoes, in my collection, shows on one side a cattail plant, "The pride of the Medicine Man", "Minot, father of the sun", and "The tree trunk spirit", whom you can hear when the wind touches the branches. On the obverse of the canoe, Simon has painted the thunderbird who comes to purify the animals when "too much is going on in their lives; that is why there are thunder storms". This transmission from art to craft is not the only way in which the Native community is becoming involved with the young painters of Manitoulin Island. The Council Chamber at West Bay is graced by two very large panels commissioned by the Chiefs and executed by Martin Panamick, and the arena, opposite the Council House, has a large mural of a canoe and a moose by Blake Debassige. Even more important, there is a small but growing number of older people who have and cherish drawings and paintings by Manitoulin's Native artists. Although the artists are often members of their families, there is every sign that family sense is not the principal motivation for the acquisition of Native works of art by Native collectors.

Manitoulin Island is a microcosm of the creative talents and of the survival problems of Canada's Native people. Its youthful painters are engaged in a quest for content, design, and style that will express their personal dreams and aspirations. Their search may yield results that may not only have importance for the course of their own lives, but may also contribute to the foundation of a new mythology, adapted to the needs of the Native peoples of tomorrow—and perhaps not only to *their* needs.

Bernhard Cinader

[1]Daphne Odjig Beavon, *Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter,—and the Spirit of Thunder,—and Mandomin,—and the Wild Geese,—and the Rabbit,—and the Chipmunk,—Punishes the Raccoon,—and the Dancing Ducks,—and the Wild Rosebushes,—Loses His Eyeballs,* Ginn and Company, Toronto, Ontario, 1971.

[2]Bernhard Cinader, in *Contemporary Native Arts of Ontario,* Oakville Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Ontario, 1973.

[3]Bernhard Cinader, in *A Heritage of Canadian Art,* Clarke Irwin, Toronto, Ontario, 1976, pp. 152-157.

[4]Bernhard Cinader, *Contemporary Native Art of Canada—The Woodland Indians,* Canada House Gallery, Trafalgar Square; Aula Luisen-Schule, Lahr, Germany; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario, 1976.

[5]Bernhard Cinader, in *100 Years of Native American Painting,* Arthur Silverman, Guest Curator, The Oklahoma Museum of Art, Oklahoma City, 1978, p. 94.

[6]Bernhard Cinader, *Contemporary Indian Art —the trail from the past to the future,* Mackenzie Gallery and Native Studies Programme, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, 1977.

[7]Olive Patricia Dickason, *Indian Art in Canada,* Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa, Ontario, 1972.

[8]Susan Enosse (oral), Mary Lou Fox (English), and Melvin Corbiere (Ojibwe), *Why the Beaver Has a Broad Tail,* illustrated by Martin Panamick, Highway Book Shop, Cobalt, Ontario, 1974, reprinted 1976.

[9]Mary Lou Fox, ed., *Nishnabe Delights,* illustrated by Martin Panamick, Woodland Studios, Cutler, Ontario, 1976.

[10]J.S. Frideres, *Canada's Indians Contemporary Conflicts,* Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., Toronto, Ontario, 1974.

[11]Jacqueline Fry in *Arts Canada,* 1972, p. 72.

[12]Jacqueline Fry, *Treaty Numbers 23, 187, 1171:* Exhibition Catalogue, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1972.

[13]Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage,* McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., Toronto, Ontario, 1976.

[14]Patronella Johnston, *Tales of Nokomis,* illustrated by Francis Kagige, Musson Book Company, Toronto, Ontario, 1970, reprinted 1975.

[15]Herbert T. Schwarz, *Tales from the Smokehouse,* illustrated by Daphne Odjig Beavon, Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton, Alberta, 1974.

[16]R.M. Vanderburgh, *I am Nokomis, too: The Biography of Verna Patronella Johnston,* General Publishing Co. Limited, Don Mills, Ontario, 1977.

[17]John Anson Warner, "Contemporary Algonkian Legend Painting" in *American Indian Art Magazine,* Summer 1978, p. 59.

One Who Lives under the Water, Blake Debassige, 1978.
131 cm x 99 cm. Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Collection.

the secularization of ojibwe imagery and the emergence of the image makers

This article will deal broadly with the origins of the "Morrisseau school" of painting, and the place of this new mode of cultural expression in the context of traditional Ojibwe imagery. The characteristics of this "Morrisseau school" are well established. The linear style features energy or life lines connecting figures from the Native cosmology. Each has its own system of expressive inner parts and is linked to a series of divided ovoids or life sources. This type of painting lies in a continuum with, and in fact represents a secularization of, visual forms employed previously for spiritual purposes. However, the emergence of specialized image makers to create these forms contrasts sharply with the previous relegation of image making to participants in spiritual rituals, of which the creation of images was itself a key ingredient.

The need for such dramatic reinforcement of the Ojibwe oral tradition, which this school of painting achieves, became necessary only after western contact and colonization. In response to a changed and threatening environment, Morrisseau drew upon one of the oldest and most powerful Ojibwe traditions: pictography —the conductor of spiritual energy. Using the old pictographic vocabulary of form and a new medium of painting, he devised a visual bulwark against the prevailing

erosion of Ojibwe culture through overexposure to a foreign or non-Native influence.

Because of its roots in Ojibwe traditions and the affinity pictography always possessed with the language and religion, the Morrisseau style of painting was easily accessible to many other Native artists. Though the common stylistic base is shared by many Ojibwe painters, the idiom allows for considerable individualization and elaboration. In the case of Morrisseau, the pictographic style led to the exploration of distant, almost Byzantine variations.

Originally pictography assisted in the transfer of power. The new mode of painting was created to preserve and transmit subjectively Ojibwe cultural experience. Born as it was of two worlds, this painting also functions in both. The Ojibwe image maker is a specially skilled teacher, a link between the past and the present, between the elders and his own community. He is also an "artist" in the western world, where his images may be bought and sold by non-Native collectors of "art objects". However, the values of the two worlds rarely coincide: "Extreme individualistic romanticism of the sort current today tends to treat the arts as if they were somehow independent of their cultural origins. The art-for-art's-sake attitude deliberately and categorically rejects the point of view that the arts relate to normative values of the culture in which they arise and that they play a useful role within that culture." (Sieber 1971:204)

ojibwe pictographic traditions

Pictographic records were created for both sacred and secular functions (Densmore 1929:174). Religious uses included the private dream images of spirit questers, scrolls for the Midéwewin Society, and magical/medicinal charms. Secular records were meant to convey information to all and were of a common idiom. Forms ranged from maps, to messages to travellers, to totemic identification, to inscriptions on grave-boards, to aids to casual story telling.

The young spirit quester, having achieved a vision, would make some sort of representation, carved or painted, and keep it with him, first wearing it upon his body, and later including it in his Mide medicine bag. This dream symbol, which might "... publish the subject of a dream but give no indication of its significance ..." (Densmore 1929:174), could be taken from him but could not be used against him. "The Ojibwe believed that the essence of the guardian manito dwelt in its representation." (Coleman 1947:70)

Charms were employed for good luck, for assistance in love, for hunting, and for aiding babies in their cradles. They could also be used to harm others (Patterson 1973:38). In curing illness, the shaman shot magic into the image, which represented the afflicted person or the spirit who was responsible. In this way, strength and health were injected into the patient, and thus images became a tool of manipulation.

Bark records of the Midéwewin Society were mnemonic devices, which helped to preserve the traditions of the society in both song and ceremonial procedure (Densmore 1929:174). Being "... a pictorial résumé of the traditional history of the origin of the Midéwewin, the positions occupied by the various guardian manidos in the several degrees, and the order of procedure in the study and progress of the candidate ..." (Hoffman 1886:165), these records were kept hidden from common view and were unrolled only when a candidate was ready to be advanced. Much like the individual dream images, these complex scrolls could be fully explained only by the maker, though generally they were understood by other society members.

The scrolls were made of bark and etched with bone or stone tools, and the drawing was sketchy and fine-lined. Frequently the figures were delicate and detailed to a surprising degree. The overall effect of the bark scrolls is one of extreme lightness, of a finely wrought openwork. Figures filled with diagonal lines or cross-hatching achieve much the same texture as that of painstakingly applied quillwork.

The key to reading these scrolls lay in the combinations of symbols and "determina-

A Dream—Chipmunk and Dancing, Leland Bell, 1977, 71 cm x 76 cm. Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Collection.

tives" as Hoffman (1886:44) termed the connecting lines. "The Ojibwa ... exhibit greater advancement in the incorporation of gestures and the suggestion of abstract ideas in connection with graphic devices." (Hoffman 1886:44)

Sacred power or a figure from the supernatural realm was indicated by a series of lines emanating from the given figure. These determinatives could be straight or wavy lines, and their meaning could be broadened to include those lines that extended from one figure to another, to indicate power relationships or sensory perception between the two figures. This network of lines greatly enlarged the range of expression, more precisely defined interrelationships, and allowed for greater complexity in abstract content of the scrolls. "The figures are more than simply mnemonic: they are ideographic and frequently possess additional interest from the fact that several ideas are expressed in combination." (Hoffman 1886:287)

A Mide scroll outlined an architectural groundplan, a procedural blueprint based on the lodge's symbolic construction and layout. This architectural/procedural model was also a cosmological model of the Cree-Ojibwe religion. Represented was the archetypal spiritual journey or path of the initiate, and the chart included the possible pitfalls, the forces of good and evil that the initiate, and Everyman, would have to face. Featured in the scrolls was a cast of animal manitous, Mide priests and representatives, and the initiate himself. By the enactment of the Mide ritual outline in the lodge, certain myths themselves were renewed.

Human figures were often just decorative rows of heads and torsos, and both animal

and human figures were frequently filled in with cross-hatching. Figures representing the initiate were usually frontal. Recurring symbols included the halved circle or ovoid, the sacred migis shell, which symbolized the spiritual power given by the Great Manitou, the same power that was "shot" into initiates. Clusters of dots within or around a figure also indicated sacred power. Horizontal lines with rows of dots between them appeared repeatedly for "... the arm of Kitshe Manitu put into the ground sacred plants ... indicated by the spots at different horizons in the earth." (Hoffman 1886:195) Vertical waving lines emanating upward from a body, or part of a body, all implied spiritual power; in the case of humans, these lines indicated power to the degree of a shaman. Horned figures, animal or human, were also powerful.

Lines extending outward from a particular sense organ such as the eyes denoted not only vision but a visionary quality. Lines from the eyes terminating in a series of short diagonal lines meant knowledge of something specific, such as medicine. An arm and a hand with lines extending to a migis shell described the ability to establish contact with Manitou and obtain power for what was wanted. If the migis was portrayed with lines touching the head or part of a figure, "... this migis, given by Kitshe Manitu, is in contact with the Mide's body and he is possessed of life and power." (Hoffman 1886:203) Lines coming from the mouth might link with another figure's ears, indicating who was speaking, who listening. Lines with added circles qualified this communication as singing, or a special form of speaking.

Although a real X-ray technique was not employed, a system of expressive inner parts was devised. A line extending from the mouth through the throat to a circular or ovoid form in the chest represented the life line attached to the heart, the seat of an individual's life force. The heart could be outsized to indicate fullness of spirit or bravery.

Transfer of energy or power was a subject of the Mide scrolls. The network of lines conveyed both a perpetual movement of power and a stabilization of formal design. The resonance of energy, graphically illustrated by the linear determinatives, at once confirmed the separateness of figures and united them in a shared rhythmical response pattern. The pattern was further unified by the overall architectural framework.

Pictography used for secular purposes was not concerned with the transfer of power. Although secular pictography bore a general resemblance to the sacred vocabulary of form, the system of sacred notations or determinatives was absent from the secular realm.

Rock paintings can be seen in abundance in the Great Lakes and Canadian Shield region. Though of undetermined origin, these paintings bear a remarkable similarity in vocabulary of form to the Ojibwe scroll pictography. Figures portrayed ranged from identifiable game animals, to human beings, to more ambiguous geometric symbols. There was also a class of fantasy creations: composites of symbols or creatures (Dewdney/Kidd 1962:174). The exact age of these paintings cannot be determined. However, it is estimated that some are over a thousand years old, judging from the plant overgrowth (Patterson 1973:33). These rock faces were accessible to an artist standing or sitting in his canoe, and in some instances, there was a ledge upon which to balance. "All paintings are visible from the vantage point of a canoe." (Pohorecky 1968:103)

The style of the rock paintings may be described as one of "... abstraction, transparency, and symbolization ..." (Giedion 1962:88), like that of the scrolls. Delineation of animals was frequently naturalistic (Dewdney/Kidd 1962:174), but human figures tended to be stylized, geometric abbreviations. Determinatives were found also on the rock figures (Dewdney/Kidd 1962:172) in the forms of horns or bristles, and the cast of characters was similar to that of the scrolls. The more abstract figures are more difficult to identify: "... some of them perhaps simplified linear versions of dream figures; others suggesting unknown artifacts; others again reminiscent of our own arithmetical symbols ... Nor can we say where distortion ends and formalization begins." (Dewdney/Kidd 1962:20)

Dignity of a Woman,
John Laford, 1975,
94 cm x 126 cm.
H. E. Band Collection.

Algonkian rock characters rarely overlapped, and often natural rock formations were incorporated into the design. "We may conclude that there is strong evidence in the Shield paintings of an interest in content that almost constantly overrides the interest in form." (Dewdney/Kidd 1962:20) Owing to the content and the remoteness of location, these paintings are thought to have been made by spirit questers and medicine men (Patterson 1973:32), and the images are thought to be sacred in themselves, for even today small offerings may be found on nearby ledges.

From the decorative arts to pictography, a number of shared formal qualities stand out. In the bark-, quill-, and bead-work, still produced today, contrasting textures, bright primary colour outlines, frequently more than one, and a system of expressive inner parts, all helped define a given character. Linear determinatives were generally limited to pictography and the description of interrelationships between figures. The vocabulary of form of the pictographic records may have been a source from which decorative designs were sometimes derived. However, the important distinction between the two was that the real subject of pictography—the *transfer of power*—was forbidden to the crafts. Determinatives, largely a tool to portray power relationships, were con-

fined to scrolls or rock art. Ceremonial objects were also allowed to bear religious iconography.

To summarize, craft designs were not considered sacred in themselves, and certain secular designs became associated with particular individuals or families through repetition and time. These designs may be described as having been in a popular idiom, familiar to the crafts-woman's community, and generally identifiable by all.

Mide scrolls were created by and for Society members, and both men and women were eligible (Patterson 1973:37). Although scroll pictography was elaborate, it was not standardized to such a degree that it could be understood in detail even by those versed in the skill. Each scroll could be interpreted accurately only by its author and initiate (Hoffman 1886:164). The scroll became the sacred property of the new member. Owing to the sacred nature of the scrolls, museums that possess examples do not exhibit them.

As distinct from decorative patterns, images, such as those of the young spirit questers, were of a spiritual nature. They were expressions of the conveyance of power, and this power could be directed for good or ill towards individuals. If snatched out of the owner's possession, the image could not be used by others against him (Coleman 1947:70). Even taken out of context, it was felt that these images still retained power, and they were not for commercial sale or public view. Unlike decorative designs, the religious images were created by people who possessed and controlled spiritual power.

For this reason, the initial reaction of Native people to Morrisseau's work was suspicious and sometimes violent. His use of the power symbols implied his control of power, his ability to use it for witchcraft purposes. His paintings made public a vocabulary of form traditionally used to convey sacred and privileged information and power, for Morrisseau had been trained as a medicine man.

contemporary painting

The traditional pictographic system of linear determinatives and the cast of characters and symbols they governed can be applied directly to the modern Morrisseau style of painting and used to "read" the images. The images, however, serve a secular purpose and are part of a community education process. Traditions which had previously been transmitted orally can be re-emphasized visually and more effectively reach a changed and broader audience. From the beginning Morrisseau intended his paintings to teach and preserve. In his first book, he stated: "I feel as I am writing this book, that it would indeed be a great loss if these legends and beliefs of my people, the Ojibway, are forgotten. For so much is lost. Every day an Ojibway elder dies and every day some of the knowledge of his ancestors dies with him. Only after he is dead is it realized how great that loss is. Also some Ojibway do not pass on their beliefs for fear of some misfortune, or they wait until the day comes to die and then it is too late." (Morrisseau 1965:3)

This style of painting then is fused inextricably to the Ojibwe language. All the young painters on Manitoulin Island employing the style are fluent in their mother tongue. It is also no coincidence that the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, which has had such a profound nurturing influence, was established to develop Ojibwe language learning materials and continues to emphasize language retention. It is believed that a child or an adult will function more easily in a foreign or non-Native culture if he possesses secure roots in his own. Posters illustrated by the young Manitoulin painters and produced by the Foundation testify to the importance of the role of language in providing cultural continuity. Some fine examples are Blake Debassige's "The Voice of the Land Is in Our Language", "Breath of Our Grandfathers", and "When Legends Fall Silent Our Ways Are Lost".

The Ojibwe language was recognized by early European missionaries as a crowning cultural achievement. Nineteenth-century anthropologists acknowledged this too, and further tried to interpret Ojibwe pictography as a pre-alphabetic linguistic notation more standardized than in fact it was (Hoffman 1895). This interpretation attempted to establish the affinity of

Ojibwe culture with European patterns of perception to justify the Ojibwe as "almost civilized" or at least "progressing" towards civilization (literacy). On the contrary, this pictography enhanced a richly flourishing oral tradition, which was distinctly non-literate.

Morrisseau, in providing a model for the following generation of Native painters, also created an idiom that demands increasing self-knowledge and cultural introspection. In teaching others, the young painters of Manitoulin Island must constantly return to their elders. The painting serves a multi-purpose function within the community: it is a vessel of traditional wisdom, a teaching aid, an individual's interpretation of his culture, a recreational diversion, a path of personal exploration, and a statement of cultural reaffirmation.

A painting style that seeks to re-establish cultural continuity and the relevance of traditional values in today's society will by its nature de-emphasize the qualities of novelty, originality, and individualism. Although the style allows a great deal of individual variation, this is not an end sought in itself. Thus to many, the thought of so many Native artists painting in the Morrisseau style is an uncomfortable one and threatens the ultimate market value of the art. But the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation in becoming more familiar with the operating principles of the art market is also assisting the artists to move knowledgeably into this sphere. With the guidance of the Foundation, the young painters have taken increasing interest in art and the law, commercial market values, and investigation of the possibility of quality evaluation. The organization itself has become a bridge between the two worlds by providing a central social role for the painters in their community and by educating them to the demands of the art market. In this process the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation has also fostered in non-Native audiences a greater awareness and understanding of Native cultural values and the roots of the contemporary Native painters of Manitoulin Island.

Elizabeth McLuhan

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Wah-bun-ung-se,
Blake Debassige, 1977,
76 cm x 106 cm.
Ojibwe Cultural
Foundation Collection.

manito-minnissing

(island of the spirits)

To most people, Manitoulin Island is a tourist's delight. Its many lakes and rivers teem with fish of all kinds and its lush green forests abound with deer, beaver, rabbit, and other animals. To the Anishnawbek of the Odawa and Ojibwe nations, Manitoulin is a sacred place. They call it Manito-Minnissing or Island of the Spirits, because it was to this beautiful and bountiful island that the great people of the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi tribes—the wisest chiefs, the bravest warriors, and the great women—were brought to be buried high up on bluffs, overlooking the entire Manitoulin and beyond.

In times gone by, the Ojibwe spiritual teachings tell us, seven major prophets came to the Anishnawbek. Each prophet left with his people predictions about what the future would bring. Each prophecy was called a fire and each fire re-

ferred to a particular era or period of time. Thus the teachings of the seven prophets are called the seven fires.

The first fire foretold that the Ojibwe nation would rise and follow the sacred shell. The religion or spirituality would serve as a rallying point for the Anishnawbek, and the traditional ways of the Midéwewin religion would be the source of much strength.

The second fire foretold that the nation would be camped by a large body of water. In this time, the direction of the sacred shell would be lost, and the religion would be weak. It was said that a boy would be born to point the way back to the traditional ways. He showed the direction to the stepping stones of the Manitoulin Island chain, and here on Manitoulin a great rebirth of religious beliefs occurred.

The third fire foretold that the Ojibwe people would find the path to their chosen ground—a land to the west where they must move their families.

The fourth fire foretold of the coming of the light-skinned race.

The fifth fire related to us a great struggle that was to come.

The sixth fire foretold that during this time grandsons and granddaughters would turn against their elders, and the spiritual ways of the Ojibwe and Odawa people would almost disappear.

The seventh fire foretold of the emergence of a new people, a people that would retrace their steps to find the sacred ways that had been left behind. The water-drum would once again sound its voice. There would be a rebirth of the Ojibwe nation and a rekindling of old fires.

At this time, the light-skinned race or *zhahgonosh* would be given a choice. If they chose the right road, then the seventh fire would light the eighth and final fire—which would be an eternal fire of peace, love, and brotherhood. If the light-skinned race made the wrong choice of roads, then the destructions they brought with them on coming to this great island would come back to them and cause much death and suffering. In the prophecies of the Ojibwe, Manitoulin Island was specifically mentioned as a place of spiritual rebirth—a place where there is power and strength, necessary for the rekindling of fires.

In the foregoing account or *ahnsohkanun*, which has been handed down from generation to generation, there are great implications, not only for the Ojibwe and Odawa people who inhabit the island at present, but for other Indian nations as well. Manitoulin is a special place of power and energy, where there is spiritual rebirth, a resurgence of our culture and traditions, which for so long have been dormant in the hearts and minds of the Anishnawbek.

The spiritual life of the Anishnawbek was the whole basis of their existence. It permeated everything they did. The Anishnawbek believe in a great supreme being, the creator of all things. The Creator taught the Anishnawbek how to live, how to hunt and fish, how to cultivate the ground. He taught them all that was wise and good, and then gave them a language in which these instructions could be shared and passed on. He instructed them to pray, to sleep, and to listen to the animals that appeared in their dreams. Through their dreams and visions they would learn to be good and firm of heart forever. The Creator gave to the Anishnawbek knowledge, with these instructions—listen to the trees, the streams, the leaves, the animals. Listen and look. The earth is our mother, to be revered and honoured, because it is from her that all life comes. Mother Earth gives us those things that make us strong and healthy. The women of our nation and Mother Earth are the ones who give life. We are the children—we are brothers and sisters, but through one spirit, we are the same.

The love of life, the love of every living thing, the joys of nature, the harmony of man with the natural world, the brotherhood of the tribe, the free spirit of the individual, the eternity of the present—these are the things that form our way of living and thinking and that have enabled us to survive as Anishnawbek.

Mary Lou Fox Radulovich

White Fish,
Martin Panamick, 1976,
57 cm x 92 cm.
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Collection.

biographies

Leland Bell
Leland Bell, an Ojibwe-Odawa artist, was born in 1953 at Wikwemikong, Manitoulin Island. He has attended the Summer Art Programme sponsored by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, and at present is completing courses at Laurentian University.

Lloyd Caibaiosai
Lloyd Caibaiosai, an Ojibwe artist from the Spanish River Indian Reserve, Ontario, was killed in a car accident in Alberta in 1975. During his career he travelled and worked throughout North America. He is considered to be a major influence on the styles of contemporary Native art, particularly of the Ojibwe-Cree-Odawa school of painters.

Blake Debassige
Blake Debassige is a 22-year-old Ojibwe from West Bay, Manitoulin Island, who began his professional career as an artist in 1972.

Shirley Chechoo Debassige
Shirley Debassige, who comes from James Bay, has taken courses at the University of Toronto and has studied theatre arts in Sante Fé, New Mexico. Though new to the field of painting, she displays a promising gift for contemporary Native art.

Don Ense
Don Ense, born in 1953, is an Ojibwe from West Bay, Manitoulin Island. In 1975 he attended the Summer Art Programme sponsored by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, and he has also completed a fine arts course at Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario. His work appeared in the 1976/77 Ojibwe Cultural Foundation art calendar, and at present he is illustrating a set of posters, sponsored by the same foundation, to be used in schools. Don Ense also composes music and writes poetry and legends. A book of poetry, which he wrote and illustrated, is to be published soon.

Francis Kagige
Francis Kagige is an Ojibwe artist, who was born in 1929 on the Wikwemikong Indian Reserve. He provided illustrations for *Tales of Nokomis* by Patronella Johnston (Musson Book Company, 1970), *I am an Indian,* edited by Kent Gooderham (J.M. Dent & Sons Canada Ltd., 1969), and *Two Articles* by Wilfred Pelletier. His work also includes two murals, one for the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo '67, the other for the Wikwemikong school on Manitoulin Island.

Eleanor Kanasawe
Eleanor Kanasawe, an Ojibwe from the Wikwemikong Indian Reserve, was born in 1958. She has been painting for two years and is at present studying silk screening at George Brown College in Toronto.

John Laford
John Laford was born in 1954 at Sheshegwaning, Manitoulin Island. He is a Native artist of Ojibwe descent.

Melvin Madahbee
Melvin Madahbee is a 22-year-old Ojibwe from Sucker Creek, Manitoulin Island. He began painting in 1972 and has attended the Summer Art Programme sponsored by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation. In 1977 he completed a course in fine arts techniques at Humber College in Toronto.

Daphne Odjig (Beavon)
Daphne Odjig was born in 1928 on the Wikwemikong Indian Reserve, Manitoulin Island, and is of Odawa descent. In 1971 she was an art instructor at the Manitou Arts Foundation. She is a founding member of the Professional Native Indian Artists Association and participated in a documentary on Native artists by the National Film Board in 1973. She wrote and illustrated a set of ten books of Indian legends for children (Ginn & Company, 1971), and she has illustrated numerous books and book covers, including *Tales from the Smoke House* by Herbert T. Schwarz (Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton). Her work has been widely exhibited and she has received a number of awards and commissions. Daphne Odjig's paintings are well represented in public and private collections.

Martin Panamick
Martin Panamick, born in 1956 at West Bay, Manitoulin Island, of Ojibwe-Odawa descent, was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1977. He did some illustrations for the annual Ojibwe calendar produced by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation and also illustrated two books, *Why the Beaver Has a Broad Tail* and *Ko-Ko-Ko, the Owl.* Several other pieces of his work will soon appear in print.

James Simon
James Simon is an Ojibwe artist born in 1954 at Wikwemikong, Manitoulin Island. He began painting at the Indian Art Club at Manitoulin Secondary School and now teaches Native art in several local schools.

Angus Trudeau
Angus Trudeau was born in 1906 on Whisky Island and is of Odawa descent. He worked as a cook in lumber camps and on the ships that sail Georgian Bay. Now retired, he paints, makes model boats, and teaches.

Randy Trudeau
Randy Trudeau, born in 1954, is an Odawa-Ojibwe artist from Buzwah, Manitoulin Island. He attended the Summer Arts Programme at Laurentian University in Sudbury and has held the position of cultural assistant in the Wikwemikong schools for several years. He also instructs at the Summer Art Programme sponsored by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation.